

Giving Them Our Best

Standards for 4-H Professional Development

Created by the National 4-H Professional Development Task Force (2005)

The following set of professional development standards is to be used as a guide for developing, conducting, and assessing professional development experiences and resources for the 4-H workforce. This universal set of standards transcends all delivery methods and learning contexts. They establish standards of excellence for 4-H professional development.

Foundations for Learning

Professional development activities and resources focus on building competencies included in the 4-H Professional Research, Knowledge, and Competencies (4HPRKC, 2004) taxonomy. 4HPRKC, 2004 establishes the academic base which supports 4-H youth development practice.

Content is based on credible, up-to-date sources of knowledge. Research-based practice is a hallmark of 4-H youth development programs

Professional development resources and activities are based upon sound learning theory. When educators utilize what is known about human behavior and change, learners are more likely to incorporate desired practices into their work.

Learning objectives are clearly stated. It is clear how the learner will benefit from the learning experience or resource. When one knows what it is they are to learn, learning has purpose and meaning.

Relevance to the Learner

Learners have an opportunity to assess their current level of knowledge and skill. To the degree possible, learning experiences are tailored to the learner's level of readiness for the content. An assessment of current knowledge and skill can also serve as a baseline for measuring change.

Learners have a say in what is learned, how it is learned, and when they learn it. Such learner input is necessary for ensuring relevance.

Learners are encouraged to learn from each other through continual communication and problem-solving. Learners bring their life experience to the learning process. Multiple communication mechanisms allow learners to stay in contact with one another.

Learning experiences help the learner apply what is learned in real-world settings, especially the communities in which they work. Examples relate to the learner's current situation. Alignment between learning and daily work is evident.

Learning experiences and resources are sensitive to all forms of human difference. Language and vocabulary is appropriate for the intended audience. Visual materials reflect diversity. Language is free of bias and jargon.

The Learning Experience

Content is delivered through a variety of methods which are suited to the learner and content. Using a variety of methods helps ensure that various learning styles are accommodated.

Learning experiences are well organized and sequential in nature. Learners must have a logical framework for engaging in the learning process.

Learning resources meet appropriate standards for technical quality (correct grammar and spelling, clear images). Such standards will vary according to medium used.

Learning experiences are of sufficient magnitude to produce the outcomes desired. The forces which initiate and or support change must be greater than the forces resisting it.

Learners “learn-by-doing.” When learners experience the benefits of a practice firsthand, they are more likely incorporate that practice into their daily work.

Learners feel safe and supported at all times. If learners perceive the risks of trying something new as being too great, they are less likely to do it.

Technology is used in a manner that supports and accelerates learning and achievement.

Accessibility issues are addressed and accommodations made so that learners can be fully engaged and participate in the learning.

Assessment and Reflection

Learners have opportunities to monitor progress, gauge improvement, and assess the impact of their learning.

Learners are presented with situations which equip them to deal with uncertainty and future change. Learning encourages continual growth and improvement.

Learners are challenged to become independent and collaborative problem solvers. They learn how to learn.

Learners are able to reflect on their learning and identify further opportunities for growth.

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